

SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE
TOWN OF FOXBOROUGH

Regular Meeting

Date: February 23, 2021

Time: 7:02 p.m.

Place: Virtual

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Richard Pearson, Mr. Rob Canfield, Ms. Tina Belanger, Ms. Michelle Raymond, Mr. Brent Ruter arrived during the approval of minutes

SCHOOL STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Amy Berdos, Mr. William Yukna, Dr. Alison Mello

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE: Ms. Chiara Pacini was not present

Mr. Pearson opened the meeting and welcomed those attending and viewing. All attendees participated remotely.

Open Public Comment

Four submissions to the Community Inbox were received since the last School Committee meeting. They were from Ms. Dawn Steidle-Haralson (2 submissions) of 158 Central Street, Ms. Erin Coombs of 21 West Street, and Ms. Neda Joury-Penders of 2 Highland Street. Members of the School Committee received all submissions and are aware of the content.

Approval of Minutes

Belanger moved; Canfield seconded

Approve the Budget Subcommittee Meeting minutes of December 21, 2020, as presented

Vote: Belanger-aye; Canfield-aye; Raymond-Aye; Pearson-aye (4-0-0)

Belanger moved; Canfield seconded

Approve the regular meeting minutes of January 26, 2021, as amended

Vote: Belanger-aye; Canfield-aye; Raymond-aye; Ruter-aye; Pearson-aye (5-0-0)

Teaching and Learning Highlight

Dr. Berdos introduced the Teaching and Learning Highlight, the FHS Be the Change Club's compelling video about COVID-19 and its global effect.

FHS Principal Ms. Diana Myers-Pachla provided background on the Be the Change Club, explaining it is an offshoot of Challenge Day, a program started at FHS a couple of years ago encouraging students to use their experiences to make a difference. There are approximately 60-70 members of this club at the high school, and they have done many projects already and have passions in many areas.

Club Advisors FHS Art Department Head Ms. Kelly Arcacha, and FHS Educational Assistant Ms. Wendy Fay also attended the meeting virtually in support of their students. Ms. Arcacha stated that

a lot of background work went into this project as students conducted interviews with high school staff and performed a lot of research.

Representing the Be the Change Club, FHS seniors Dominic St. Pierre and Neha Jammula discussed their reasons for creating the video, most importantly to make people understand that their actions and behavior effect the people around them and to remind students to practice COVID-19 safety protocols.

After the video was shown, discussion with the Committee followed.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Berdos updated the Committee on the following:

- The COVID-19 community prevalence rate in Foxborough is lower and has moved to yellow.
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provided new guidance that lifted the bus capacity limits for elementary students. This is good news in reaching the goal in getting our students back to in-person learning. Other changes in protocols will follow.
- News broke today that Education Commissioner Jeff Riley is going to request that the Board of Education give him the authority to pursue a phased-in, full in-person return to school beginning with elementary students. More information will follow.
- FPS has been working towards having students return to full in-person learning. There are a lot of factors to consider, one of them being a reduction in social distancing for students from 6 feet to 3 feet.
- While there is a vaccine on the horizon, educators have been moved down on the eligibility list, which has caused much frustration.
- A return-to-school survey was sent to staff today; a survey for parents will be sent out tomorrow. Survey data will be reported back to the Committee. There is no specific date as to when students will return full time.
- Any return-to-school plan would mean a renegotiation of memoranda of agreement with several of our collective bargaining units, including teachers.
- We are hoping to receive updated guidance in the areas of music and chorus.
- The Fall 2 Athletic season began yesterday, February 22.
- Applications for incoming preschool for 2021-2022 are available at the Burrell and on the FPS website.
- Kindergarten registration for the 2021-2022 school year is ongoing.

Discussion with the Committee followed.

Fall II Sports Update

Athletic Director Joe Cusack provided a Fall II sports update. The winter season ended last Sunday with girls' hockey, and Fall II started Monday afternoon, February 22. Mr. Cusack was happy to report that all winter sports got through the season, and everyone did a great job with modifications. Students were extremely cooperative. There were some quarantining issues.

Sports offered for the Fall II season are football, volleyball, winter track and cheer. Football will be played on the turf this season; track will train mostly outdoors; and volleyball has gym space available to play. Cheer received some last minute rule modifications today, and try outs/practices are ongoing. Try outs will be done in small group settings. Volleyball and football have scrimmages scheduled at the beginning of March. Track meets will mirror the swim meet approach and conduct virtual meets. Locker rooms are open for students who are in school during the day, and capacity limits are monitored.

Discussion with the Committee followed.

Performing Arts Discussion

Dr. Berdos initiated discussion regarding guidance released in the summer and updated last fall relating to chorus, singing and musical theater. Currently these activities cannot occur indoors, and despite repeatedly questioning the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), no movement on safety protocols has been made that would allow chorus and singing indoors. As the weather is not now conducive to being outdoors, the music and performing arts staff has had to become incredibly flexible and creative in delivery of their instruction and extracurricular activities.

FHS Music Department Head Ms. Cami Tedoldi joined the meeting virtually and described to the Committee how this has impacted teachers and students and has limited the ability to teach and to provide extracurricular activities that music students are missing out on. She provided several examples where staff had to "reinvent" the curriculum in order to continue teaching. There is a lot of virtual teaching happening. To advocate on the behalf of this issue, Ms. Tedoldi wrote a letter to DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley requesting that further attention be given to the guidance on singing in schools and noting the importance of programs like athletic and the arts and that they be treated equitably. Ms. Tedoldi thanked the Committee for acknowledging this dilemma and remarked it needs additional advocacy.

Discussion with the Committee followed. It was agreed that the absence of singing indoors has been a huge loss for students involved in singing and performing arts. The Committee supports a strongly worded letter to DESE authored by the School Committee Chair and signed by all School Committee members in support of revised guidance to allow singing indoors.

Ms. Tedoldi thanked the Committee and the community for their support in this effort.

Ruter moved; Raymond seconded

Approve the School Committee Chair author a letter to the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) in support of further examination of the requirements for singing indoors such that they are in line with athletics in Massachusetts

Vote: Raymond aye; Ruter aye; Canfield aye; Belanger aye; Pearson aye (5-0-0)

Annual Community Report

Dr. Berdos described the 9th annual FPS Community Report as a joint venture between the schools and the School Committee that is sent to every mailing address in Foxborough and highlights the many things that take place during the school year. This year's report looks a little different than past reports because of the pandemic and subsequent school closings, as some data usually reported on was not available this year.

Dr. Mello discussed each topic on the 4-page report, highlighted new items of information, and talked about positive outcomes and results in this highly unusual school year. She specifically pointed out the district's commitment to equity and inclusion, diversity in student demographic data, and the move to a 1-to-1 computing environment across the district.

Discussion with the Committee followed. School Committee members agreed the Annual Community Report is a valuable communication tool and provides important information to those who have students attending FPS as well as those who do not. The report will be mailed during the month of March.

Superintendent's Mid-Cycle Review

Dr. Berdos presented her 2020-2021 Mid-Cycle Review, the purpose of which is to foster productive dialogue with the School Committee and provide an update on her goals. She rated progress on her goals in the areas of Professional Practice, Student Learning, District Improvement and Other; provided a visual of the 2020-2021 Focus Indicators and tied her goals to the four standards; and included the Indicator Rubric for Superintendent Evaluation.

Dr. Berdos offered a summary of progress based on the three themes that have been used in the past: what she is really proud of; what she is working hard on; and what challenges she faces. Each of these questions was answered in detail and emphasized keeping schools open, deployment of 2,800 laptops to students and teachers, staying abreast of changes in COVID-19 guidelines and safety protocols, all while keeping a focus on the district's strategic objectives and meeting the needs of all students.

Discussion with the Committee followed.

Other Matters

Ms. Belanger congratulated and extended her thanks to Ms. Edna Fuller, Taylor School Nurse, who retired last week after 20 years of service to Taylor School students.

Dr. Berdos congratulated Ms. Fuller as well and wished her the best in her next chapter.

Dr. Mello stated that Kindergarten registration for the 2021-2022 school year is open. A Kindergarten information page dedicated to incoming Kindergarten families can be found on the FPS website.

Mr. Ruter expressed his thanks to the district that our students are in school and have been attending in-person since the beginning of the school year.

Mr. Pearson extended thanks to Drs. Berdos and Mello for their leadership, noting we have turned a corner into the second half of the year.

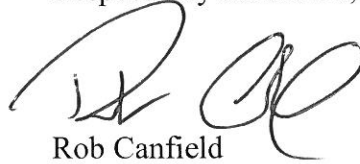
Ruter moved; Belanger seconded

Adjourn the meeting

Vote: Raymond aye; Ruter aye; Canfield aye; Belanger aye; Pearson aye (5-0-0)

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Rob Canfield
Clerk

Attachments:

Budget Subcommittee meeting minutes of December 21, 2020

Regular meeting minutes of January 26, 2021

Performing Arts Discussion

Annual Community Report – Winter 2021

Superintendent's Mid-Cycle Review

Approved: March 9, 2021